

Radcliff

Stormwater Utility FAQ

What is the stormwater utility for?

The stormwater utility was established to provide revenue to maintain and improve existing stormwater infrastructure in Radcliff as well as develop a comprehensive stormwater management plan as mandated by the Federal government in the SMS4 Phase II-KPDES Permit.

What was the process for establishing the stormwater utility?

A Citizen's Task Force, the Stormwater Advisory Committee, was established by the City of Radcliff in March 2002. Stormwater Advisory Committee members were appointed by the Mayor in March 2002. Representatives were from a broad spectrum of stakeholders including churches, private businesses, real estate, regulatory agencies, and schools.

The Stormwater Advisory Committee met monthly to discuss stormwater management issues, alternate budget proposals, and funding. The Committee developed the Best Management Practices for the Stormwater Management Program and the Phase II permit requirements. Various funding solutions were also discussed, including funding through bonding, increased taxes, or the formation of a utility. The funding solutions were compared for cost of administration, equity, and ease of development. The Stormwater Advisory Committee determined that establishing a utility was the best solution to the funding problem and made that recommendation to the Radcliff City Council on February 18, 2003.

Following the Stormwater Advisory Committee's recommendation, the Radcliff City Council passed an ordinance. The ordinance established the stormwater utility. In June of 2003, the city council set the utility rate at \$ 4.50 per residential dwelling unit or Equivalent Residential Unit.

The first stormwater utility bill will be mailed in September, 2003.

What is stormwater and why is it a problem?

Stormwater is water from rain and snowmelt. As rain and snow falls to earth in agricultural and undeveloped areas, it is either absorbed or it slowly runs off and dissipates.

In a growing city like Radcliff, where rooftops and paved areas not only prevent the water from being absorbed but help it run off at a much faster rate, problems arise. Inadequate drainage systems compound these serious problems associated with heavy rains and snow thaw. The stormwater accumulates in many areas of the city, causing nuisance flooding and possible threats to public health and safety.

Flooding is only a part of the problem. As the rain falls onto our streets and runs off, it carries with it pollutants such as gasoline, oil, and heavy metals. Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers are washed from lawns and other green spaces. With the passage of time, these pollutants will buildup in our waterways and underground drainage systems causing significant environmental damage to our streams, rivers and lakes. These pollutants may also threaten our drinking water supply.

Why a stormwater utility now?

The United States EPA issued new stormwater regulations in 1999 that require communities the size of Radcliff to control water pollution by stormwater runoff. We are required to implement municipal stormwater programs that will reduce stormwater pollution discharges. The EPA has listed six control measures that communities must implement as part of the stormwater management program. In addition to meeting the city's stormwater needs, Radcliff's new stormwater utility will provide the city with the tools necessary to meet the new regulation requirements.

What are the utility fees based on?

The stormwater utility fee is based on the amount of stormwater runoff from building roofs, driveways and parking lots and other impervious areas.

What is impervious surface?

Impervious surface means those disturbed or hard surfaced areas that either prevent or retard the natural entry of water into the soil. Rooftops, buildings, streets, parking lots, sidewalks, asphalt, concrete, other paving, driveways, gravel, patios, artificial turf and storage areas are all examples of impervious surfaces. These improvements effect natural infiltration, creates more runoff, increases the rate of runoff and alters runoff patterns of stormwater that drains from an area.

How is the impervious surface measured?

In order to determine how much impervious surface is on a piece of developed property, the City utilized Geographical Information System (GIS) maps of our area to determine the total square footage of the impervious surface on a parcel and the actual lot size. Because lot sizes and impervious surfaces vary from residential parcel to residential parcel, the sizes of **impervious surface** areas were averaged. In Radcliff, the average amount of impervious surface per residential property is 2,800 square feet. Properties with impervious surfaces in this range are classified as an Equivalent Residential Unit, or one ERU. Every Radcliff home is equal to one ERU.

What is a residential dwelling unit?

As defined in the ordinance establishing the stormwater utility, dwelling unit means a single unit that provides complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons including permanent provision for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.

How are residential fees determined?

Residential property is charged a fee of \$ 4.50 per residential unit. A single family home is charged one unit, a duplex is charged two units. Non-single family residential properties (Non-SFR) are billed according to how much impervious area or hard surfaces exists on the property. The square footage of the impervious area is determined and this amount is divided by the ERU to translate the non-single family residential impervious area to a residential equivalent.

How much hard surface area is an ERU?

ERU stands for Equivalent Residential Unit and is used to convert the impervious area on non-residential property to a residential dwelling unit value. The ERU was calculated by measuring the impervious areas of a scientific sampling of residential properties in Radcliff. Based on this study, a determination was made that the average residential property in Radcliff has 2,800 square feet of impervious area on it. This value of 2,800 square feet became the ERU for Radcliff. To use the ERU, a non-residential property's impervious area is measured and the total square footage is divided by the ERU to determine how many units will be charged. For example, if a non-residential property has a total of 14,000 square feet of impervious area, the property will be charged for 5 units ($14,000/2,800 = 5$). Its stormwater charge would be 5 times the residential rate or 5 times \$ 4.50 per month.

Who has to pay?

All developed property within the City of Radcliff will pay the stormwater service fee. That includes houses, schools, public facilities, churches and businesses. The only exceptions are streets within the City. These areas are excluded because they are designed to collect and carry stormwater runoff.

Why are churches and schools being billed?

The service charge, just like water and sewer fees, is based upon the cost of services provided. Because this is not a tax, it is collected from all customers who receive service. Churches and schools contribute a significant amount of runoff to the City because of their size and amount of hard surface. They will be treated like all other customers under the rate structure.

I have a retail store in a shopping center and currently receive a water bill. Will I get the stormwater bill as well?

All impervious area within a multi-tenant facility such as a shopping center or apartment complex is consolidated into one bill. The bill will be sent to the owner or person responsible for the improvements or management association.

Are we the only city with a stormwater utility fee?

No. Stormwater utility fees have been imposed in many cities in the United States and several in Kentucky.

Where does the money go?

Some of the other important components of this program include:

- a) improve stormwater quality through monitoring and reduction of illicit discharges and pollutants
- b) public information and education concerning stormwater issues
- c) increased maintenance/repair of the City's stormwater system
- d) development of stormwater design standards and regulations

- e) field inspection/enforcement of these standards
- f) construction of long overdue stormwater projects.

Isn't there already a fund for stormwater or drainage?

No. Money from the City's General Fund has provided some limited funding in the past. These funds are not always available and we must develop a dedicated revenue stream.

Why should I have to pay? I live on a hill and have no drainage problem.

You may not have a problem, but the runoff generated from your property is contributing to problems downstream. The approach being taken through this program recognizes that everyone contributes to the problem (runoff and pollution) and everyone will share in the results (improved water quality, reduced flooding, unimpaired access to roads, etc.).

I have a septic tank. Why should I pay this fee?

The stormwater utility fee is used specifically to address citywide stormwater issues. A septic tank is used to treat wastewater at a specific location. This wastewater is water that comes out of individual households or businesses. Properties that use septic tanks are not charged for sanitary sewer service. It should be noted that properties that are connected to the sanitary sewer system do pay for the sanitary sewer service as well as the stormwater utility fee.

If the stormwater utility fee is to fund stormwater related issues, why does the bill come from Hardin County Water District I?

Hardin County Water District I handles the billing for the City of Radcliff Waste Water Utility and now the Stormwater Utility. Funds collected by Hardin County Water District I goes to the appropriate utility fund. All fees collected will be maintained in a separate account and can only be used for stormwater management and drainage projects.

What happens if Radcliff fails to meet the new regulations and requirements of the EPA and the Kentucky Department of Water?

The City of Radcliff could face fines up to \$25,000 a day for each violation from the Federal EPA.